DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 471 531 JC 030 039

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TITLE	The State of Post-Tenure and Long-Term Faculty Evaluation. AACC Research Brief. Leadership Series.
INSTITUTION	American Association of Community Colleges, Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	AACC-RB-02-7
PUB DATE	2002-00-00
NOTE	17p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Community College Press, P.O. Box 311, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701 (Order no. 1543, sold in packs of 20, $20). Tel: 800-250-6557 (Toll Free); Fax: 301-604-0158; e-mail aaccpub@pmds.com.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS
DESCRIPTORS	Community Colleges; Educational Practices; *Evaluation Methods; Faculty Development; *Faculty Evaluation; Job Security; Personnel Policy; *Tenure; *Tenured Faculty; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	*Post Tenure Review

ABSTRACT

This document summarizes a national study of how U.S. community colleges evaluate tenured professors. The report begins with an introduction to the current status of post-tenure evaluation and outlines the common arguments that frame the debate on the purpose and necessity of evaluating tenured faculty. The authors describe current assessment practices and note that most new evaluation policies emphasize faculty development. In this study, surveys were distributed to the chief instructional administrator and the faculty leader at 934 community, technical, and junior colleges in all 50 states. Both groups were asked to assess their present system for evaluation of tenured or long-term faculty, to make judgments on the quality and effectiveness of the process, and to point out areas in need of improvement. Key findings include: (1) both instructional administrators and faculty leaders strongly believed that tenured or long-term faculty should be evaluated; and (2) most administrators and faculty felt that the emphasis on evaluation should shift from providing a basis for assessment of performance and decisions on retention, remediation, and dismissal to providing a basis for individual faculty development and improvement. The report concludes with specific recommendations for improvement based on the research findings. (Author/RC)

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AACC-RB-02-7

RESEARCH BRIEF

The State of Post-Tenure and Long-Term Faculty Evaluation

By Hans A. Andrews, Christine M. Licata, and Beverly Jo Harris

ED 471 531

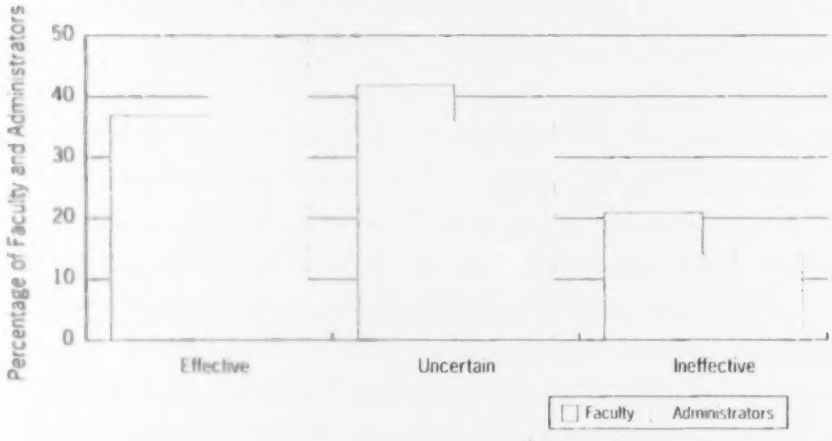
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Community College Post-Tenure Faculty Review Survey, a national study of how U.S. community colleges evaluate tenured professors and other long-term faculty, was funded by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and the New Pathways II Project of the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE). The study, which was conducted in two parts, surveyed instructional administrators and faculty leaders.

Highlights of the survey results:

- Both instructional administrators and faculty leaders strongly believed that tenured or long-term faculty should be evaluated.
- Most administrators and faculty felt that the emphasis of evaluation should shift from providing a basis for assessment of performance and decisions on retention, remediation, and dismissal to providing a basis for individual faculty development and improvement.
- Significant percentages of both administrators and faculty questioned the effectiveness of current evaluation practices.
- An important goal of evaluation was the weeding out of incompetent faculty, but neither group felt that this goal was being met.

FIGURE 1 **Faculty and Administrator Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Post-Tenure Evaluation**



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Evaluation of Tenured and Other Long-Term Faculty: Status and Issues

The field suffers from a lack of data on how tenured and other long-term community college faculty are evaluated and whether current evaluation practices lead to better instruction. A recent report on community college faculty pointed out shortcomings in evaluation systems. Specifically, the author noted that "a lack of clear goals and standards of evaluation generates resistance and suspicion that result in evaluation efforts having no practical effect in improving performance" (Rifkin 2000, 7).

Growth of Post-Tenure Review

Systematic and comprehensive evaluation of tenured faculty, commonly referred to as post-tenure review, is becoming more popular in institutions of higher learning. Pressure to develop review policies is frequently exerted by legislatures, governing boards, and citizen-regents (Miller, Licata, and Kavanagh, 1999). Recent data suggest that in more than 37 states, some or all public four-year institutions have already instituted such evaluation policies or are in the process of doing so (Licata and Morreale 2002, 3). The status of post-tenure review in public and private two-year colleges, however, is difficult to assess and track because little reporting has been done on the subject.

Even though most postsecondary institutions have a long-standing policy of assessing faculty performance to determine or adjust salary, merit raises, promotions, grants, sabbaticals, and other forms of compensation, post-tenure review as it is known today goes well beyond traditional methods of review. In today's climate of increased scrutiny of postsecondary institutions, the term *post-tenure review* usually refers to an array of practices by which institutions encourage high levels of professional performance and development. Normally, post-tenure review is a process distinct from annual review.

Categories of Assessment Practices

Current assessment practices can be separated into three categories: (1) comprehensive, periodic review of all tenured faculty, usually at five- to seven-year intervals; (2) selective review of faculty whose performance is below standard as determined by their annual review; and (3) systematic annual review that includes significant professional development planning. In assessments in this third category, the annual merit review is expanded beyond administrative assessment and includes meaningful peer review, development of long-term professional-development goals, and provision for appropriate action if performance is deemed substandard.

Evaluation Objectives

Underlying the three categories of assessment are differing evaluation objectives. The objective of some evaluations is to be *summative:* This means that the results of the review are made explicit and, ideally, translated into action. Such action may

include preparation of a long-term professional development plan, reward and recognition measures, and formulation of an improvement plan if deficiencies are noted. Other evaluations are *formative:* These focus on development and growth and rarely result in formal personnel action. Regardless of the category or objective, evaluation processes usually build on the annual review. In addition, almost all new evaluation policies emphasize faculty development as a goal. Further policy objectives are then incorporated into the review, depending on institutional mission and culture and preexisting evaluation practices.

The Debate

Debate persists over the purpose and necessity of post-tenure review. Those outside the academy tend to see the post-tenure review process more in summative terms—as a means to make postsecondary institutions more accountable, adaptable, and responsive to change. Internal stakeholders often view it as a powerful means of strengthening performance and advancing professional development. A fear often expressed by faculty is that the administration will use the evaluation to get rid of outspoken or nonconforming faculty. Faculty groups who see value in developmental peer review also remain suspicious of the effect of consequential reviews on tenure policy and tradition.

In its statement on post-tenure review, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) suggests that performance review can be improved and supports developmental reviews intended for faculty growth. The association contends, however, that normal collegiate review processes and policy provisions already in place can handle the infrequent instances of underperformance or nonperformance and that additional disciplinary monitoring is redundant. AAUP argues that summative reviews are particularly objectionable because they substitute "managerial" accountability for professional responsibility. As a result, AAUP cautions that such reviews will alter and diminish due-process protections inherent in academic freedom, leaving the door open to the easing of prevailing standards for dismissal—that is, moving that standard from incompetence to merely unsatisfactory performance, which may be correctable (AAUP 1999).

Despite the fact that post-tenure review policies are now in place in postsecondary institutions in more than 30 states, there has been no systematic reporting of outcomes. Advocates and critics alike base their positions largely on philosophical arguments and anecdotal illustrations. Given the intense national interest in this topic, the growing movement toward greater accountability, and the need to maintain the professional vitality of senior faculty, careful postevaluation tracking is necessary if researchers, college administrators, and others are to understand the impact this review process is having within institutions and on individual faculty members. Because most post-tenure review policies are fairly new, postsecondary institutions have a particularly compelling need for hard data on the effects of these policies.

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Previous Study

In a previous study of post-tenure evaluation, the first two authors of this research brief surveyed two-year colleges in the 19-state North Central Accrediting Region of the United States (Andrews and Licata 1992; Licata and Andrews 1990). The chief academic leader and faculty leader (defined as the chair of the faculty senate/assembly or faculty union) were both asked to respond to questions concerning their institutional post-tenure evaluation practices as they existed in 1989–90.

Results from that study showed that while 70 percent of the responding institutions claimed to have formal post-tenure evaluation, faculty leaders and instructional administrators disagreed about the outcome of the evaluation. Further, within each group, there was no consensus on whether the reviews were effective. Faculty leaders said that there was little administrative follow-up from such evaluations and that faculty generally were left to their own devices when it came to correcting deficiencies. Administrators, on the other hand, said that plans for improvement and professional growth were established and supported by the college. The major problems cited by survey respondents were insufficient institutional commitment to faculty development, lack of a meaningful system for rewarding outstanding performance, and failure to identify and weed out poorly performing or otherwise incompetent faculty.

The Present Study

Methodology

For the present study, surveys were sent to the chief instructional administrator and the faculty leader at 934 community, technical, and junior colleges in all 50 states. These colleges were all members of AACC. Both groups were asked to assess their present system for evaluation of tenured or long-term faculty, to make judgments on the quality and effectiveness of the process, and to point out areas in need of improvement.

Seventy-one percent of the instructional administrators and 57 percent of the faculty leaders returned completed surveys. Table 1 shows return rates for each of the six accrediting regions in the United States.

The present national study parallels the nature and scope of inquiry used in the earlier work and reports on practices in all 50 states. Generous financial support from both the American Association of Community Colleges and the American Association for Higher Education New Pathways II Project made the study possible.

In those states where tenure does not exist, the survey focused on evaluation practices for long-term faculty. *Long-term faculty* are defined as full-time faculty who have been at an institution for more than three years. The researchers used follow-up mailings to ensure a high response rate. There was a higher return rate for both groups of respondents in the current 50-state study than in the original 19-state study, in which only 65 percent of administrators and 51 percent of faculty

TABLE 1 **Sources of Survey Responses**

Regional Accrediting Association	Institutions	Administrators	Faculty Leaders
Middle States	97	66 (68%)	55 (57%)
New England	46	25 (54%)	19 (41%)
North Central	320	244 (76%)	208 (65%)
Northwest	72	53 (74%)	38 (53%)
South	293	201 (69%)	151 (52%)
West	106	75 (71%)	59 (56%)
Total	***934***	***664 (71%)***	***530 (57%)***

leaders responded. Both studies, however, had rates of return considered acceptable for survey research.

Survey Results, Part 1: Post-Tenure and Long-Term Faculty Review Practices

Survey participants were asked to respond to the following six questions about post-tenure and long-term faculty review as currently practiced:

1. What are the purposes of post-tenure (long-term) faculty evaluation?
2. What should be the purpose(s) of post-tenure (long-term) faculty evaluation?
3. In your opinion, to what extent is post-tenure (long-term) faculty evaluation effective in accomplishing the purpose established for it at your institution?
4. If you checked *uncertain* or *ineffective* in the last question, what are your major reasons?
5. What is done with the information generated by post-tenure (long-term) faculty evaluation?
6. What best describes the type(s) of evidence used in your evaluation system?

As table 1 shows, 664 instructional administrators and 530 faculty leaders responded to these six questions.

Questions 1–2: The purposes of post-tenure (long-term) evaluation. In response to question 1, 31 percent of administrators and 46 percent of faculty leaders chose the response "The purpose of evaluation is to provide information necessary to assess performance, retention, remedy deficiencies and dismissal."

In response to question 2, 56 percent of

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administrators and 59 percent of faculty leaders indicated that the purpose **should be** "to provide a basis for individual faculty development and improvement."

While the two groups of respondents had similar perspectives on the purposes of post-tenure evaluation, both groups said that there should be a shift in emphasis from using this information strictly for assessing performance to providing professional development opportunities for individual faculty.

Questions 3–5: The effectiveness of post-tenure (long-term) evaluation. In response to question 3, 50 percent of administrators who responded to this item indicated that they considered such evaluation effective. Thirty-six percent indicated uncertainty about its effectiveness, and 14 percent said it was ineffective. Faculty leaders who responded showed less confidence in post-tenure (long-term) evaluation. Only 37 percent said they considered it effective, while 42 percent were uncertain and 21 percent said it was ineffective. Thus, a narrow majority of surveyed faculty indicated that they considered post-tenure evaluation to be, at best, of uncertain effectiveness. Among those expressing a preference, administrators were about evenly split between those who considered evaluation effective and those who had either doubts or strong reservations.

In response to question 4, which asked respondents to state their major reasons for checking *uncertain* or *ineffective* in question 3, the largest number of responses in each group (31 percent of administrators, 34 percent of faculty) went to this statement: "Post-tenure review is not taken seriously because there is no significant follow-up action to the review." More than 19 percent of each group also selected the responses "little evidence of positive outcomes so far" (administrators 21 percent, faculty 20 percent) and "There are no sanctions for poor performance" (administrators 26 percent, faculty 17 percent).

Question 5: Use of information generated by post-tenure (long-term) faculty evaluation.

In response to this question, a majority of administrators (68 percent) chose the response "It is shared with the faculty member and a plan for improvement is developed." Faculty were somewhat less confident of this outcome; although 50 percent selected it, another 50 percent chose the response "It is shared but the faculty member is left to correct his/her own weaknesses."

Question 6: Sources of evidence used in the evaluation process. In response to question 6, administrators and faculty shared similar views. The largest proportion of both administrators (42 percent) and faculty (43 percent) who responded to this question indicated that a combination of student evaluations and administrative (in-class) evaluations constituted the most common form of evidence used in evaluations. Forty percent of the administrative group and 38 percent of the faculty group chose a combination of evidence from students, peers, and administrative supervisors as the most common form.

Survey Results, Part 2: Opinions Regarding Evaluation

Survey respondents were also asked to provide opinions on 12 statements concerning post-tenure and long-term faculty evaluation. Results for this section of the survey are presented in table 2. As in table 1, 664 administrators and 530 faculty leaders responded.

In answer to questions 1–3, responses from administrators and faculty alike overwhelmingly supported faculty evaluation. Also, clear majorities in both groups felt that faculty development must be a key objective of the process.

The responses to questions 4–6 showed that both faculty and administrators felt strongly that there should be multiple sources of input into the faculty evaluation process. Both groups also weighed in fairly strongly in support of the view that qualified administrators should be a source of information, but not necessarily the only source. Reliance on other faculty (i.e., peers) as the sole source of evaluation information was endorsed by only 17 percent of administrators and by only 37 percent of faculty leaders.

In response to question 7, a majority of respondents in each group expressed a preference for application of the same evaluation criteria to tenured and long-term faculty as to nontenured and short-term faculty. Responses to question 8 showed that large majorities in both groups perceived evaluation as having the potential to nurture faculty improvement and career vitality.

Interestingly, responses to questions 9 and 10 showed that significant majorities of both administrators and faculty felt that evaluation in their colleges did not lead to the weeding out of incompetent faculty, and that even larger majorities thought that the elimination of incompetent faculty should be a prime objective of evaluation.

Responses to question 11 showed clear support in both groups for the use of agreed-upon individual work plans as the basis for identification of areas requiring improvement by individual faculty. Not surprisingly, responses to question 12 showed doubts among administrators about the need for tenure in the years to come, and a conviction among most faculty leaders that tenure would continue to be needed.

Strengths of Faculty Evaluation Systems

Respondents were asked to identify the strengths of their evaluation systems for tenured and long-term faculty. While not all respondents provided written comments, nine significant strengths of post-tenure review emerged from those comments that were provided (see table 3).

When responses are broken out by group, it becomes evident that some strengths were more likely to be cited by one group than by the other. The four strengths most commonly mentioned by administrators are shown in table 4; the four most commonly mentioned by faculty leaders are shown in table 5.

Both administrators and faculty leaders often noted that a primary strength of post-tenure review was promotion of focused growth and development

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TABLE 2 **Opinions Regarding Evaluation: Survey Results**

Statement	Response*	Administrators (N = 664)	Faculty Leaders (N = 530)
1. There should be evaluation of tenured and long-term faculty to assess level of performance and faculty development needs.	SA/A SD/D	631 11	499 30
2. Tenured and long-term faculty should welcome assessment of their overall performance.	SA/A SD/D	633 13	472 13
3. There should be a faculty development program as part of tenured and long-term faculty evaluation.	SA/A SD/D	565 9	442 19
4. Only qualified instructional administrators should evaluate tenured and long-term faculty.	SA/A SD/D	328 313	266 197
5. Only tenured and long-term faculty colleagues should evaluate tenured and long-term faculty.	SA/A SD/D	115 523	197 291
6. There should be multiple sources of input into tenured and long-term faculty evaluation; i.e., administrators, students, and peers.	SA/A SD/D	635 16	466 36
7. The criteria used to evaluate tenured and long-term faculty should differ from criteria used with nontenured or short-term newer faculty.	SA/A SD/D	262 385	211 280
8. Tenured and long-term faculty evaluation increases the likelihood of faculty growth and vitality.	SA/A SD/D	555 74	425 66
9. Tenured and long-term faculty evaluation leads to the weeding out of incompetent faculty.	SA/A SD/D	199 434	137 354
10. Tenured and long-term faculty evaluation should lead to the weeding out of incompetent faculty.	SA/A SD/D	543 102	376 110
11. Growth contracts (such as individual work plans) mutually agreed to should be the primary basis for evaluation of tenured and long-term faculty.	SA/A SD/D	487 196	313 195
12. By the year 2010 traditional tenure will no longer need to exist in the majority of community colleges in the U.S./Canada.	SA/A SD/D	355 247	123 339

* SA/A = strongly agree/agree; SD/D = strongly disagree/disagree.

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TABLE 3 **Strengths of Post-Tenure Review Most Commonly Mentioned by Survey Group as a Whole**

Strength	Times Mentioned
1. Promotes focused growth and development	119
2. Improves quality of instruction	92
3. Is a continuous process that promotes dialogue	86
4. Provides feedback to faculty on strengths and concerns	76
5. Is a uniform, systematic process involving multiple evaluators	52
6. Encourages goal setting	49
7. Provides documentation for promotion, retention	47
8. Is nonthreatening: involves self- or peer evaluation	37
9. Provides few or no strengths	35

by faculty. The feedback provided through the process was also an area of strength noted frequently by both administrators and faculty. Administrators were more likely than faculty to cite the continuous process and ensuing dialogue and the uniform, systematic method of review as strengths; faculty leaders were more likely to indicate that improved instruction resulted from the process.

Major Concerns about Evaluation Systems

Respondents expressed several concerns about post-tenure review at their institutions. Although not all respondents commented, 10 broad concerns emerged from the remarks of those who did respond (see table 6). The concerns cited most often by administrators and faculty leaders are presented in table 7 and table 8, respectively.

Responses from both administrators and faculty leaders were closely aligned on three concerns about post-tenure review: the inconsistency or lack of follow-up; the lack of objectivity and consistency in evaluations; and the lack of any significant action taken as a result of the reviews. Another common concern among administrators was the length of time involved in administering the review. Among faculty leaders, additional concerns were procedural items: the forms used, the people involved, and the methods employed.

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TABLE 4

Four Strengths of Post-Tenure Review Most Commonly Mentioned by Administrators

Strength	Times Mentioned
1. Is a continuous process that promotes dialogue	60
2. Promotes focused growth and development	57
3. Provides feedback to faculty on strengths and concerns	44
4. Provides uniform, systematic process involving multiple evaluators	41

TABLE 5

Four Strengths of Post-Tenure Review Most Commonly Mentioned by Faculty Leaders

Strength	Times Mentioned
1. Promotes focused growth and development	62
2. Improves quality of instruction	55
3. Provides feedback to faculty on strengths and concerns	32
4. Provides few or no strengths	31

TABLE 6 **Concerns about the Evaluation System Mentioned by Survey Group as a Whole**

Concern	Times Mentioned
1. Inconsistent or no follow-up	105
2. No real consequences or sanctions	91
3. Lack of objectivity, consistency	85
4. Inappropriate forms, process, methods	69
5. Excessive time required to administer	65
6. Lack of seriousness given to process	44
7. Punitive nature of review, causing stress and anxiety	42
8. Lack of relationship between review and promotion/tenure/retention incentives	32
9. Lack of training for evaluators	26
10. Insufficient funds for professional development	25

Suggestions for Improvement

An invitation to respondents to offer suggestions for ways to improve current evaluation systems produced more than 700 different suggestions. All responses were tallied and grouped into thematic categories.

Five major categories emerged. Interestingly, the themes and the categories were very much the same for both groups. When the themes were rank-ordered by frequency, the sequence was the same for both faculty and administrators (see table 9).

Within each broad category, particularly "Improve Procedural Aspects," there were several instances where respondents in different regional areas made the same recommendation. These recommendations, which are listed by category on the following page, merit special attention because they can help community colleges shape appropriate changes.

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TABLE 7 **Concerns Most Commonly Mentioned by Administrators**

Concern	Times Mentioned
1. No real consequences or sanctions	54
2. Inconsistent or no follow-up	50
3. Lack of objectivity, consistency	45
4. Excessive time required to administer	44

TABLE 8 **Concerns Most Commonly Mentioned by Faculty Leaders**

Concern	Times Mentioned
1. Inconsistent or no follow-up	55
2. Lack of objectivity, consistency	40
3. Inappropriate forms, methods, lengthy process	38
4. No real consequences/sanctions	37

TABLE 9 **Suggestions for Improvement**

Category	Times Mentioned by Administration	Times Mentioned by Faculty Leaders	Total
1. Improve procedural aspects	170	135	305
2. Provide follow-through feedback/monitoring	94	90	184
3. Connect results to rewards and consequences	84	77	161
4. Include peer review	28	47	75
5. Provide training	35	30	65

Summary

The 50-state survey described in the present study documents the perspectives of chief instructional administrators and faculty leaders with respect to the need, purpose, outcomes, and effectiveness of current evaluation practices. It is the first national study of this type to be conducted in community colleges. The return rates of 71 percent from instructional administrators and 57 percent from faculty leaders are considered outstanding for a national survey of this kind. Instructional administrators and faculty leaders strongly agree that evaluation of post-tenure and long-term faculty is needed. They also support the position that faculty development should be one of the primary outcomes of evaluation.

Both groups expressed much doubt about the effectiveness and quality of evaluation. Insufficient faculty development, no observable positive outcomes to date, inadequately trained evaluators, and the lack of sanctions for poor performance evidently have led to this reaction.

Although faculty and administrators alike identified strengths of the present evaluation system, it is evident that changes are needed, judging from the overwhelming call from the survey respondents for community colleges to improve procedural aspects, provide meaningful follow-

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SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT: SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Category 1: Improve Procedural Aspects

- Simplify evaluation forms and improve instruments for collecting feedback.
- Clarify evaluation criteria and make effectiveness of teaching most important criterion.
- Require student input in evaluations and improve the system by which students rate teacher performance.
- Require classroom observations.
- Change the frequency of evaluation (equally divided between "make more often" and "conduct less frequently").
- Streamline the entire evaluation process.
- Include self-evaluation and establishment of individual goals as part of process.
- Infuse more consistency into the evaluation process.
- Expand evaluation criteria beyond teaching.
- Make the process more formal.
- Monitor evaluation procedures and give the appropriate administrator specific oversight responsibilities.
- Tie evaluation process to institutional values.
- Subject administrators to evaluation.
- Infuse more trust into the process.

Category 2: Provide Follow-Through Feedback/Monitoring/Link Follow-Up to Establishment of a Professional Development Plan

- Provide funds and assistance for faculty development.
- Ensure timely feedback.
- Maintain regular feedback and follow-through after the plan is developed.
- Require a mandatory improvement plan and oversee it.
- Create a mentoring system.

Category 3: Connect Results to Rewards and Consequences

- Tie results to merit pay or pay for performance.
- Tie results to other types of recognition, rewards, and incentives.
- Impose real consequences and sanctions as needed.
- Tie review to promotion.

Category 4: Include Peer-Review Component

- Include peer involvement, not just administrator involvement, in the evaluation process.

Category 5: Provide Training

- Provide training for chairs and other evaluators, including faculty peers.

through and feedback after review, connect results to either reward or sanctions, include a peer review component in evaluation, and provide adequate training for evaluators.

As community colleges ready themselves for record enrollments, it is critical to ensure that students receive a quality education. One strategic approach to making this happen is to invest in the institution's human capital. Faculty evaluation and development are the crucial means of ensuring overall quality in the teaching/learning process and of demonstrating institutional accountability. The results of the present study demonstrate that faculty and administrators believe evaluation is important but want the evaluation to have meaning for those who are evaluated. Community colleges clearly need to do more to achieve this goal.

About the Authors

Hans A. Andrews is Distinguished Fellow in Community College Leadership at Olney Central College in Illinois. He retired as President of the college in 2002. He is a national speaker, researcher, and consultant on improving faculty evaluation systems. He is author of three books—*Evaluating for Excellence*, *Merit in Education*, and *Teachers Can Be Fired: The Quest for Quality*—and over 30 articles on faculty evaluation.

Christine M. Licata is Associate Dean of Academic Affairs at Rochester Institute of Technology/NTIP, New York, and is a consultant, researcher, and writer on post-tenure evaluation practices at senior universities as well as community colleges. Her book, *Post-Tenure Faculty Evaluation: Threat or Opportunity?*, was a breakthrough publication on post-tenure. She currently works with the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), New Pathways II Project.

B. Jo Harris is President of West Virginia University Institute of Technology. She completed her doctoral dissertation on faculty evaluation practices and outcomes. She is co-author of several professional articles on evaluation with Andrews and Licata.

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